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He Outlines 5 Principles of Reform
Istook Joins Fight to Revamp Social Security

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Ernest Istook (R-OK) has thrown his support behind legislation to reform and protect Social Security. The Growing Real Ownership for Workers Accounts Act (GROW) introduced today would place Social Security's surplus off-limits by changing how it is used. Rather than loaning that money to the government for other spending, Social Security would begin creating individual accounts that workers would own and that would be fully inheritable.

Social Security money could no longer be used as borrowed money that is spent on other government programs. The change also means that this borrowing would no longer mask the true size of the national debt.

"While we still have a few years left with a Social Security surplus, let's change it so that those funds must be used to pay for Social Security and nothing else," said Istook. **"After current Social Security recipients get their checks, the extra money is borrowed by Congress to pay for other federal programs. That's the system set up in the days of FDR, and it's never been changed. The GROW act will make sure that never happens again."**

"This is only the first of several steps necessary to protect Social Security before its surplus runs out in a few years. There's five principles we should follow to protect Social Security, and this starts putting the first three of them in place. Those principles are:

- 1) Take away the ability of Congress to borrow from Social Security, and to spend that money on other things.**
- 2) Enable those who want better retirement benefits to pursue them, with the same money they're already contributing.**
- 3) Guarantee that people who want to stay in the current system can do so.**
- 4) Provide permanent stability to the system.**
- 5) Don't create any new tax burdens on any generation.**

Currently, any funds left over after paying current Social Security recipients (the Social Security surplus) are spent on other government programs instead of being saved. According to the Social Security Trustees, at this rate the Social Security surplus will run out in 2017.

Under the GROW act, those under the age of 55 can choose to stay in the same Social Security system as today, or to have GROW accounts, where their money would be invested in marketable Treasury bonds. Other secure investments might be permitted at a future time.

"The debate has confused a lot of people, because folks began describing details before explaining the problem and agreeing on the principles to follow. Once we agree on the correct principles, the other details start falling into place," added Istook. **"One thing's for sure—we can't afford to do nothing. Ignoring the problem won't make it go away. And let's not forget that everyone needs a three-part retirement plan: First is what you save for yourself; second is what you save through a company retirement plan; and third is Social Security. Nobody should depend on just one of those three; everybody should plan ahead."**

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